



# *Town of Manchester*

41 Center Street • P.O. Box 191  
Manchester, Connecticut 06045-0191  
[www.manchesterct.gov](http://www.manchesterct.gov)

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February 27, 2023

Re: Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Health Sub-Committee  
Tuesday, February 28th

General Comment on H.B. No. 6659: An Act Concerning the State Budget for The  
Biennium Ending June 30, 2025, and Making Appropriations Therefor

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Joel Cox, and I am the Director of Human Services for the Town of Manchester, and a resident of Enfield. I am writing to you today and provide general comment on H.B. No. 6659: An Act Concerning the State Budget for The Biennium Ending June 30, 2025, and Making Appropriations Therefor.

The Town of Manchester has made a significant investment in our local response to homelessness. As part of these efforts, we have worked closely with our local, regional and state partners to offer programs, resources and support to people experiencing homelessness. Over the course of this last year, we have seen higher than ever numbers of homelessness in our community. As we have worked with our partners in these efforts, one thing is abundantly clear: Connecticut's historically underfunded homeless response system is overburdened and facing unprecedented challenges.

It is critically important to note that since 2019, our system has witnessed a 30% increase in unsheltered households and an 82% increase in CAN appointments for those at imminent risk of homelessness. This rise in demand is happening while homeless service providers are facing limited funding, rising operational costs and workforce shortages. Without funding, the challenges faced by social service and homeless service providers threaten the safety net that they are intended provide.

As the Director of a municipal social services agency, I've witnessed firsthand the impact of shortcoming in the state's homelessness system and the resulting burden placed on our towns, cities and service providers. The Town of Manchester has committed hundreds of thousands of dollars in funding to support housing stability, cold weather response, outreach and other related homelessness efforts and services. However, these efforts are often less effective due to being stifled by shortcomings in the larger response systems.

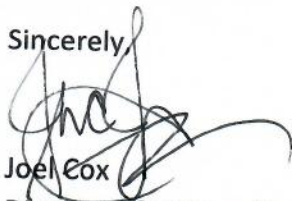
It is urgent that this Committee help to Rescue the Homeless Response System and act to protect the safety nets in place for our most vulnerable citizens. I support the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness' (CCEH) recommendation to commit \$50,000,000 to rescue the Homeless Response System and these specific allocations:

- **A one-time increase of \$7,713,799 in DMHAS Housing/Supports Services line** to address chronic underfunding of homeless response nonprofits and to ensure adequate wages for front-line homeless response workers.
- **\$5.95 million annually** in the DOH Housing/Homeless Services line for Coordinated Access Network infrastructure, to ensure that the indispensable emergency services we provide are available to all.
- **\$5 million annually** in the DOH Housing/Homeless Services line for the annual Cold Weather Emergency Response Program.
- **\$2 million annually** in the DOH Housing/Homeless Services line for a Flexible Funding Subsidy Pool to subsidize housing and provide flexible assistance, which have been shown to lower costs to the health care system and lead to improved individual health outcomes.

In addition to the above, I encourage you to continue to seek ways to support municipal efforts to address homelessness in our state. Connecticut's town and cities are often the first point of contact when residents are facing homelessness. Unfortunately, our efforts are often hampered by overburdened systems and a homelessness response framework that does not always align with each municipality's unique needs and resources.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer this commentary. It is with your support that we can rescue the homeless response system and help make sure Connecticut's residents are healthy and stably housed.

Sincerely,



Joel Cox  
Director of Human Services  
Town of Manchester